

**The
Millere
his Tale**

That lik a turtel trewe is my moornyng;
I may nat ete na moore than a mayde.
Go fro the wyndow, jakke/fool, she sayde,
As help me God, it wol nat be, com ba me;
I love another, and elles I were to blame,
Wel bet than thee, by Jhesu, Absolon!
Go forth thy wey, or I wol caste a ston,
And lat me slepe, a twenty devel wey!
¶ **A**llas, quod Absolon, and weylaway!
That trewe love was evere so ylle biset!
Thanne kysse me, syn it may be no bet,
for Jhesus love, and for the love of me.
¶ **W**iltow thanne go thy wey? quod she.
¶ **Y**e certes, lemman, quod this Absolon.
¶ **T**hanne make thee redy, quod she, I come anon,
And unto Nicholas she seyde stille,
Now hust, and thou shalt laughen al thy fille.
¶ **T**his Absolon doun sette hym on his knees,
And seyde, I am a lord at alle degrees,
for after this I hope ther cometh moore.
¶ **L**emman, thy grace, and sweete bryd, thyn oore.
¶ **T**he wyndow she undoth, and that in haste;
Have do, quod she, com of, and speed thee faste,
Lest that oure neighebores thee espie.
¶ **T**his Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drie;
Dirk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,
And at the wyndow out she pitte hir hole,
And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
ful savourly, er he was war of this.
¶ **A**bak he sturte, and thoughte it was amys,
for wel he wiste a womman hath no berd;
He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, fy, alas, what have I do?
¶ **T**ehee! quod she, and clapte the wyndow to;
And Absolon gooth forth a sory pas.
¶ **A** berd, a berd! quod hende Nicholas,
By Goddes corpus, this goth faire and weel!
¶ **T**his sely Absolon herde every deel,
And on his lippe he gan for anger byte;
And to hymself he seyde, I shall thee quyte!
¶ **W**ho rubbeth now, who froteth now his
lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with
clooth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, **A**llas!
My soule bitake I unto Sathanas,
But me were levere than al this toun, quod he,
Of this despit awroken for to be.
¶ **A**llas! quod he, alas! I nadde ybleynt.
His hoothe love was coold and al yqueynt;
for fro that tyme that he hadde kiste hir ers,
Of paramours he sette nat a kers;
for he was heeled of his maladie,
ful ofte paramours he gan defie,
And weepe as dooth a child that is ybete.
¶ **A** softe paas he wente over the strete
Until a smyth men cleped daun Gerveys,
That in his forge smythed plough/harneys;
He sharpeþ shaar and kultour bisily.
¶ **T**his Absolon knokketh al esily,
And seyde, Ando, Gerveys, and that anon.
¶ **W**hat, who artow? I am heere, Absolon.

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¶ **W**hat, Absolon! for Cristes sweete tree,
Why rise ye so rathe? ey benedicitee!
¶ **W**hat eyleth yow? Som gay gerl, God it woot,
Hath brought yow thus upon the viritoot;
By seinte Note, ye woot wel what I mene.
¶ **T**his Absolon ne roghte nat a bene
Of al his pley; no word agayn he yaf;
¶ **H**e hadde moore tow on his distaf
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, freend so deere,
That hoothe kultour in the chymenee heere,
As lene it me, I have therwith to doone,
And I wol brynge it thee agayn ful soone.
¶ **G**erveys answerde, Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles alle untold,
Thou sholdest have, as I am trewe smyth;
Ey, Cristes foo! what wol ye do therwith?
¶ **C**herof, quod Absolon, be as be may,
I shal wel telle it thee tomorwe day.
And caughte the kultour by the colde stele,
ful softe out at the dore he gan to stele,
And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
¶ **H**e cogheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndowe, right as he dide er.
¶ **T**his Absolon answerde, Who is ther
That knokketh so? I warante it a theef.
¶ **W**hy nay, quod he, God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, my decrelyng.
Of gold, quod he, I have thee broght a ryng;
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save;
ful fyn it is, and therto wel ygrave;
¶ **T**his wol I yewe thee, if thou me kisse.
¶ **T**his Nicholas was risen for to pisse,
And thoughte he wolde amenden al the jape,
He sholde kisse his ers, er that he scape;
And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,
And out his ers he putteth pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche/bon.
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon:
¶ **S**PEK, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art.
¶ **T**his Nicholas anon leet fle a fart,
As greet as it had been a thonder/dent,
That with the strook he was almoost yblent;
And he was redy with his iren hoot,
And Nicholas amydde the ers he smoot.
Of gooth the skyn, an hande/brede aboute,
The hoothe kultour brende so his toute;
And for the smert he wende for to dye.
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crye,
Help! water! water! help, for Goddes herte!
¶ **T**his carpenter out of his slomber sterte,
And herde oon crien Water, as he were wood,
And thoughte, **A**llas, now comth Nowelis flood!
He sit hym up withouten wordes mo,
And with his ax he smoot the corde atwo.
And doun gooth al, he foond neither to selle,
Ne breed ne ale, til he cam to the selle
Upon the floor; and ther aswowne he lay.
¶ **A**d stirte hire Alison, and Nicholay,
And criden, Out! & harrow! in the strete.
¶ **T**he neighebores, bothe smale and grete
In ronnen for to gauren on this man
That yet aswowne he lay, bothe pale and wan;
for with the fal he brosten hadde his arm;

But stonde he moste unto his owene harm,
for whan he spak he was anon bore doun
With hende Nicholas and Alison.
¶ **T**hey tolden every man that he was wood,
He was agast so of Nowelis flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanytee
He hadde ybought hym knedyng/tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyde hem, for Goddes love,
To sitten in the roof, par compaignye.
¶ **T**he folk gan laughen at his fantasie;
¶ **I**nto the roof they kiken & they gape,
And turned al his harm unto a jape;
for whatso that this carpenter answerde,
It was for noght, no man his reson herde;
With othes grete he was so sworn adoun,
That he was holden wood in al the toun,
for every clerk anonright heeld with oother;
¶ **T**hey seyde, The man was wood, my leeve
broother.
And every wight gan laughen of this stryf.
¶ **T**his swyved was this carpenteres wyf,
for al his keepyng and his jalousye;
And Absolon hath kist hir nether eye;
And Nicholas is scalded in the towte;
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!
Here endeth the Millere his Tale.

The prologe of the Reves Tale.

¶ **A**llas! folk hadde laughen at this
nyce cas
Of Absolon & hende Nicholas,
Diverse folk, diversely they
seyde,
But for the moore part, they
louge and pleyde;
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,
But it were oonly Osewold the Reve.
Bycause he was of carpenteris craft
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft.
He gan to gruche and blamed it a lite.
¶ **S**o theek, quod he, ful welhoude I yow quite,
With bleryng of a proude millers eye,
If that me liste speke of ribaudye,
But ik am oold, me list no pley for age,
Gras/tyme is doon, my fodder is now forage;
This white tope writeth myne olde yeres;
Myn herte is mowled also as myne heres,
But if I fare as dooth an openers;
That like fruyt is ever leng the wers

HEERE BIGYNNETH THE REVES TALE.

¶ **A** Crumpyngtoun, nat
fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther gooth a brook, &
over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook
ther stant a melle;
And this is verray sooth
that I yow tell.
A millere was ther dwel-
lyng many a day,

Til it be roten in mullok, or in stree.
¶ **W**e olde men, I drede, so fare we;
Til we be roten kan we nat be rype.
¶ **W**e hoppen ay, whil that the world wol pype,
for in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,
Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon;
for whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure asschen olde is fyr yreke.
¶ **F**oure gleedes han we, whiche I shal devyse,
Avaunting, lying, anger, covetise.
Thise foure sparkles longen unto eelde.
Oure olde tymmes mowe wel been unweelde,
But wyl ne shal nat failen, that is sooth;
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne
Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.
for sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon;
And ever siþe hath so the tappe yronne,
Til that almoost al empty is the tonne.
¶ **T**he stream of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe,
The sely tonge may wel ryng and chymbe
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yore;
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore.
¶ **W**HAN that oure hoost hadde herd
this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.
He seide: What amounteth al this wit?
What, shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
The devel made a Reve for to preche,
And of a souter a shipman or a leche.
Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme,
Lo, Depeford, and it is half wey pryme.
Lo, Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne;
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne.
¶ **N**ow, sires, quod this Osewold the Reve,
I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve,
Thogh I answer and somdeel sette his howve,
for leverful is, with force, force of showve;
This dronke Millere hath ytold us heer,
How that bigyled was a carpenteer,
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon,
And, by youre leve, I shal him quite anon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
I pray to God his nekke mote breke.
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke.
Thus endeth the prologe of the Reve.

As eny peok he was proud and gay,
Pipen he koude, and fasshe, and nettes beete,
And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;
And by his belt he baar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
A joly poppere baar he in his pouche,
Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche;
A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camuse was his nose;
As piled as an ape was his skulle.